

Mind Mapping Summary

(Based on an analysis of the CLRPC Mind Map Exercises – Summary Reports, 2002)

4 “Mind Mapping” exercises were held with 4 different groups of residents as the first stage of a citizen outreach program for the Comprehensive Long Range Plan. Meetings were held on:

3/23/02 40 participants

3/09/02 30 participants

2/09/02

5/01/02

Participants were asked four questions:

- Enduring Strengths: “An enduring strength of Concord is...”
- Attractions: “What attracted you to Concord, and what keeps you here?”
- High Points: Shared stories regarding high points of their experience in Concord, when they felt most alive, most engaged in the town, most committed and most proud to live here.
- Critical Issues/Challenges: “What are the trends, issues, and challenges that Concord will face between now and 2020?”

The responses to these questions were compiled and analyzed. The following themes were the most dominant :

Concord’s Strengths

The top 7 community strengths were seen as being:

- Community character/spirit
- History
- Town government
- Open Space and Natural Features
- Diversity
- Retail Center
- “It’s home”

Community character and spirit was by far the most frequently mentioned of the Town’s perceived strengths.

Community Character and spirit

This was what participants seemed to value most about the Town by far above the other attributes. They described Concord's character in a number of ways including: welcoming small town, profound sense of place, small town feeling, charm and beauty/visual character of the town center, community pride, sense of community.

History

Participants were proud of the town's connection to the past, appreciation of history and participation in historic events. In terms of the latter, several residents mentioned that participation in the celebration of events related to the history of the Town as being the high point of their experience in Concord. An appreciation of history is also seemingly related to the desire to preserve historic buildings. Some residents expressed pride in a history of "strong spiritual/intellectual traditions"

Town Government

Much satisfaction was expressed regarding the open town meeting, respect for diversity of interests and good decision making. Several participants also alluded to the fact that there are many volunteering opportunities and ways to get involved in town government which was valued and appreciated.

Open Space and Natural Features

Much appreciation of Concord's natural features and natural beauty was expressed especially with regard to open space, water bodies and working farms.

Diversity

Participants reported enjoying the town's diversity in terms of economic, racial, economic, ages and interests.

Retail Center

Residents enjoy the fact that there are no strip malls, unique stores, and locally-owned, independent, non-franchised businesses in the centers of town.

It's home

Several respondents felt that what attracted them to Concord and/or what keeps them in town are family and friends, and/or they were born in Concord.

Concord's Challenges

The eleven challenges with the most "votes" were:

Land Use Changes
Affordable Housing
Cost of Schools
Aging Infrastructure
Open Space Preservation
Expected growth of population
Loss of Autonomy
Scarcity of fiscal resources
Traffic
Preservation of Unique Qualities
Demographic Diversity

Land Use Changes and Affordable Housing were the two concerns with the most votes by a relatively large margin, as compared to the rest.

Land Use Changes and how to respond

The need for land use coordination, growth management, and prioritization were listed as suggestions for dealing with the impact of increased public use of land and other land use changes.

Affordable Housing

Challenges cited included the increasing cost of housing and the pressure on elderly and young residents, mansionization, and the lack of economic diversity the high cost of housing will result in.

Cost of Schools

Maintaining the commitment to the schools in terms of space needs, recreation and other costs was seen to be a challenge for the future.

Aging Infrastructure

Buildings, schools, septic systems and roads were listed as examples.

Open Space Preservation

The pressure to use open space, the need for recreational land were seen as making it more difficult to preserve open space.

Expected Growth of Population

Pressures on land, services and other resources

Loss of Autonomy

Dependence on state funding

Scarcity of fiscal resources

Real and perceived

Traffic

Increases on Routes 2 and 2A, parking, MBTA, and the West Concord/Surplus Railroad Spur were listed as issues.

Preservation of what makes Concord unique

Historic preservation, sense of community

Demographic Diversity

This concern related to the first one regarding the cost of housing in effect "pricing out" socio-economic diversity.

Mind Mapping Response Tallies

The following charts represent an approximate tally of the mind mapping responses. They are only approximate because not all responses were tallied in the same way, different categories were used in each session and not all session were given all four questions. Given these limitations, the tally still provides a good sense of what participants most value about Concord and what their most serious concerns regarding the future are.

Enduring Strengths

“An enduring strength of Concord is...”

Enduring Strength	Comments	Number of Responses
Community character And spirit	Welcoming, small town Profound sense of place Charm, beauty Not just a bedroom community Good size Visual character of town center Identity of town Sense of community Pride Know everyone/small town feeling	17
History	Political, ecological, architectural, spiritual Connection to our past Patriotism Appreciation of history	5
Town Government	Open town meeting Respect, diversity of interests Listen, respect, good decisions	5
Open Space/natural features	Working farms, conservation trusts Rural nature Rivers, ponds, wetlands	5
Diversity	Economic, housing, ages, interests	4
Retail center	Locally owned businesses Independent, non-franchised businesses	4
Preservation	History, land, natural resources, architecture Regard for stewardship	3
Its home	Family homesteads here Continuity of families People stay	3
Recreation Facilities		1
Planning		1
Mix of uses	Commercial, residential, cultural, recreation,	1

	etc.	
Concern for elders		1
Intellectual tradition	Shared values – integrity and things of the mind	2
Willingness to take on difficult issues	(e.g. domestic violence)	1
Institutions	Strong independent: Hospitals, libraries Diverse institutions: court, prison	2
Sense of safety	Physical and emotional	1
Spirituality		1
Farming	Good soil	1
Train		1
Municipal service		1
Real Estate Market	1 of 250 top towns in the US in home Real Estate Market Value (#221)	2
Culturally Active		1
Medical Center		1
Support for education.culture		1
Favorable attitude towards business		1

Attractions

“What attracted you to Concord, and what keeps you here?”

Attractions	Comments	Number of Responses
Community character	Small town/village Viable small scale center Ambiance and atmosphere Kids playing in the streets Stability A town, not a suburb Sense of community Community pride Sense of self, sense of place	11
Natural beauty	Rivers, ponds, open space Access to Walden Pond and recreation	8
Residents	Caring, highly educated Friendly neighbors Diversity of economic level	6
Shops	West Concord 5&10, bookstores, no strip malls Owning a business	6
Its home	Born here, family members, friends	6
Strong spiritual/intellectual traditions	Thoreauvian transcendental culture Vibrant religious communities	6
History	Tradition of revolutions	5
Volunteering opportunities	Active participation	4
Beautiful architecture		1
Places to walk		1
Town government	Accessible, excellent employees Town meeting	3
Libraries		2
Room to garden		1
Land use mix		1
Emerson Hospital		1
Few traffic lights		1
Great police chief		1

Good sign by-laws		1
Schools		3
Trains	Rail access to city	2
Housing Availability/affordability	Variety of housing	2
Cultural activities	Museums/art concerts	2
Proximity to Boston & jobs		2
Working farms		2
Public Transportation		1
Safe	Safe place for families to raise children	2
Independent thinkers		1

High Points

Shared stories regarding high points of their experience in Concord, when they felt most alive, most engaged in the town, most committed and most proud to live here.

High Point	Comments	Number of Responses
Unique Community events	Musketaquid Winter Solstice Bonfire Midnight Recreation of Paul Revere's ride Bicentennial Parade Patriot's Day Parade Evening of Memorial Service after 9/11 Commemoration of North Bridge	8
Participation in citizen affairs	Volunteering Town meeting	5
Welcomed when moved in	Helpful neighbors	3
Concord Neighborhood Network		1
Unique community	Rotary Club, Concord Players, Finance Committee	1
Parades		3
Jewish temple celebration		1
Ever present historical context		2
Working farm – organic farming		1
Ability to tolerate diversity of opinions	Bicentennial Long Range Planning Committee	2
Activism		1
Filming "It's Never too Late"	Felt pride	1
Quality of Town Employees	Helpful, polite	1
Kids involvement with high school plays and community		2
Town meeting		1
Showing visitor's the town	Feeling pride and awe	1
Being a 6 AM swimmer at Walden Pond		1
That my children chose to live here		1

Critical Issues/Challenges

“What are the trends, issues, and challenges that Concord will face between now and 2020?”

Critical Issue/Challenge	Comments	Number of Votes
Land Use Changes	Need for land use coordination Rethink zoning, managing growth, determine how to prioritize Final build out Impact of increased public use of land	83
Affordable Housing	Cost of housing, tear downs, cost of real estate, mansionization, lack of economic diversity Ability of older and young people to live here is being challenged Provide housing other than single family; consider needs of elderly	82
Maintaining Commitment to Schools	System needs to change Discrepancy in agreement in needs of schools	56
Aging Infrastructure	Buildings, schools, septic, roads	34
Open Space Preservation	Need for protection, pressure to use, loss of, need for recreation land, regional biodiversity and sustainability, Estabrook lands	27
Expected Growth of Population		20
Loss of Autonomy		20
Scarcity of fiscal resources	Perceived and real	19
Traffic	Increases on Routes 2 and 2A Parking MBTA W. Concord/Surplus Railroad Spur	18
Preservation	Preservation of what makes Concord unique Historic preservation Sense of community	18
Demographic Diversity		15

Open Respectful Dialogue		14
Hanscom Field		13
Economic Development	Managing development Loss of consumer/retail outlets Balance needs: local vs. commercial	12
Civil communication	Not in my back yard Elitism and incivility	11
Commercial areas	Homogenized culture Starbucks/Dunkin' Donuts Parking Beharrel Development	11
Impact of global warming	Climate changes, pollution	10
Need for renewable energy infrastructure	Make a plan and be a model for the world	9
Depending on Property Taxes to fund all needs		9
Need for improved telecommunications connections	Cell towers, cable, fiber-optic tech	9
Regional Growth		8
Bifurcation of interests by age (families w/children vs. elderly)		6
Role of state regs and funding	Unfunded state mandates	5
State influence on taxation	Join with other communities to affect state tax policies	3
Attracting more civic involvement		5
Lack of supports for working women	Lack of preschool/day care Need more support of families	5
Building community centers		5
Less time for volunteerism		5
Increased mobility & changes in where & how people work		5
Mediate disputes over limited resources		4
Health problems from environment	Environmental toxins, allergies	3
Pressures on ecosystem/services		3
Orienting to community's greater good		2
Town vs. bedroom community		2
Place for teens		2
Local planning & 40B		1
Uncertainty of state aid	Education	1
Tax rate for businesses		1

Ground water		2
White Pond neighborhood		1
Crisis of values		1
Vision for schools		1
Waste Water	Septic, waste water treatment	2
Assessment policy		2
Role of seniors		1
Role of private schools, hospitals, parks, churches		1
Vitality of nonprofit organizations		1